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ADDIS ABABA FOR AU AMBASSADOR COURVILLE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: MARR MASS PREL KE XW

SUBJECT: INAUGURAL MEETING OF FRIENDS OF AU EASBRIG FORUM

¶1. (U) THIS IS AN ACTION MESSAGE. ACTION REQUEST AT PARA 7.

¶2. (U) SUMMARY: AT THE INVITATION OF THE AFRICAN UNION'S EASTERN AFRICA STANDBY BRIGADE COORDINATION MECHANISM (EASBRICOM), CURRENT AND POTENTIAL DONORS MET IN NAIROBI ON DECEMBER 10 TO DISCUSS EASBRIG'S STRATEGIC PLAN AND THE TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE NEW "FRIENDS OF EASBRIG" FORUM. EMBASSY NAIROBI DCM SLUTZ AND ASSISTANT ARMY ATTACHE BUCHHOLZ ATTENDED, JOINED BY CJTF-HOA COMMANDER ADMIRAL HART AND POLAD NEWTON. UGANDA DEFENSE MINISTER AND CHAIRPERSON OF THE EASBRIG COUNCIL OF MINISTERS RUTH NAKABIRWA DELIVERED OPENING REMARKS TO URGE DONOR BUY-IN AND ASSISTANCE, FOLLOWED BY A BRIEFING FROM EASBRICOM DIRECTOR (UGANDA) SIMON MULONGO ON THE STRATEGIC PLAN'S OBJECTIVES AND TIMELINE. THE UK, ACTING AS THE CHAIR FOR THE FRIENDS, CO-CHAIRIED THE MEETING WITH EASBRIGCOM. IN SHORT, AU-EASBRICOM PLANS TO STAND UP AN "INITIAL OPERATING CAPABILITY OF A TRAINED FORCE OF BRIGADE SIZE ON STANDBY AND MAINTAINED IN MEMBER STATES TO THE REQUIRED READINESS LEVELS BY THE END OF 2010." TO ACHIEVE THIS, EASBRICOM SEEKS ASSISTANCE FROM DONORS, AND MULONGO'S BRIEFING OUTLINED SPECIFIC AREAS FOR DONOR CONSIDERATION. SEVERAL FRIENDS/DONORS AROUND THE TABLE (NOTABLY THE UK, CANADA, THE NETHERLANDS, AND NORWAY ON BEHALF OF THE NORDIC BATTLE GROUP) NOTED CURRENT AND FUTURE PLANS TO ASSIST CERTAIN ASPECTS OF THE PLAN. MOST DONORS/FRIENDS, INCLUDING THE U.S., ASKED QUESTIONS, INDICATED INTEREST, BUT MADE NO SPECIFIC COMMITMENT. U.S. PARTICIPANTS NOTED THAT CURRENT USG LAW PROHIBITS SECURITY ASSISTANCE TO MULTI-LATERAL, REGIONAL SECURITY ORGANIZATIONS BUT THAT WASHINGTON WAS EXPLORING LEGAL AUTHORITIES THAT WOULD PERMIT ASSISTANCE TO ORGANIZATIONS LIKE EASBRICOM. PARTICIPANTS DISCUSSED THE DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE FRIENDS OF EASBRIG FORUM AND COMMITTED TO SEEKING HOME OFFICE APPROVAL. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) ON DECEMBER 10, REPRESENTATIVES OF NAIROBI-BASED MISSIONS OF CANADA, DENMARK, FRANCE, GERMANY, ITALY, THE NETHERLANDS, NORWAY, SPAIN, SWEDEN, THE UK, U.S., SOUTH AFRICA, AND THE EU; CJTF-HOA, THE GERMAN ASSISTANCE ORGANIZATION GTZ, THE FRIEDRICH EBERT STIFTUNG, AND THE (SOUTH AFRICAN) INSTITUTE FOR SECURITY STUDIES ATTENDED A BRIEFING AND TOUR OF THE EAST AFRICAN STANDBY BRIGADE COMMAND IN KAREN/NAIROBI, KENYA. (NOTE: JAPAN WAS INVITED BUT DID NOT ATTEND.) THE PURPOSE OF THE MEETING WAS TO INTRODUCE EASBRICOM AND ITS STRATEGIC PLAN TO CURRENT AND POTENTIAL DONOR PARTNERS. UGANDA DEFENSE MINISTER AND CHAIRPERSON OF THE EASBRIG COUNCIL OF MINISTERS (OF DEFENSE AND SECURITY) RUTH NAKABIRWA, WHO CAME TO NAIROBI SPECIFICALLY TO ADDRESS THE FORUM, DESCRIBED THE OVERALL AFRICAN UNION VISION AND MISSION: TO CONTRIBUTE TO REGIONAL AND CONTINENTAL PEACE THROUGH A REGIONAL CONFLICT PREVENTION, MANAGEMENT AND RESOLUTION CAPABILITY ABLE TO RESPOND EFFECTIVELY TO CRISIS ANY WHERE ON THE CONTINENT." SHE NOTED THAT BY JUNE 2008, THE NECESSARY POLITICAL DECISION MAKING STRUCTURES THAT CAN AUTHORIZE, MANDATE AND OVERSEE THE EMPLOYMENT OF REGIONAL

CAPABILITY SHOULD BE IN PLACE. (NOTE: THE NEXT MAJOR STEP IN ESTABLISHING THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK WILL BE THE JANUARY 2008 MEETING OF CHIEFS OF DEFENSE STAFFS IN COMOROS.)

¶ 13. (U) EASBRICOM DIRECTOR SIMON MULONGO DESCRIBED IN GREATER DETAIL THE OBJECTIVES OF EASBRIG, FORMALLY AUTHORIZED AND ESTABLISHED IN 2005. THE EASBRIG COORDINATION MECHANISM (EASBRIGCOM) WAS OPERATIONALIZED IN MARCH 2007 TO SERVE AS THE SECRETARIAT OF EASBRIG. EASBRICOM AND THE EASBRIG PLANNING ELEMENT (PLANELM) ARE LOCATED IN NAIROBI. ENCOMPASSING THIRTEEN (13) COUNTRIES, EASBRIG IS ONE OF THE FIVE REGIONAL COMMANDS WITHIN THE AFRICAN UNION'S CONTINENT-WIDE AFRICA STANDBY FORCE (ASF) CAPABILITY THAT IS ENVISIONED TO BE OPERATIONAL BY 2015. THIS CAPABILITY WILL CONSIST OF NOT ONLY MILITARY, BUT ALSO POLICE AND CIVILIAN COMPONENTS. THE AU'S ROADMAP ANTICIPATES A CONTINENTAL COMMAND POST EXERCISE IN LATE 2010 TO VALIDATE THIS CAPABILITY. IN ORDER TO MEET THIS ROADMAP, THE REGIONS WILL BE REQUIRED TO CONDUCT THEIR OWN VALIDATION PROCESS AND EASBRIG'S TARGET IS TO HAVE INITIAL OPERATIONAL CAPABILITY BY THE END OF 2010. MULONGO OUTLINED IN SOME DETAIL THE SPECIFIC ASSISTANCE REQUIREMENTS REQUIRED TO ACHIEVE ITS 2010 TARGET; AMONG THE TOP PRIORITIES WERE DEVELOPING/TRAINING CIVILIAN AND POLICE CAPABILITY, ADMINISTRATION, LOGISTICS, AND COMMUNICATIONS. (COPIES OF THE EASF STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND THE EASBRIG STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN WILL BE POUCHED TO AF/RSA.)

¶ 14. (U) BOTH NAKABIRWA AND MULONGO WERE CLEAR ABOUT THE CHALLENGES FACING EASBRIG: AN INCREASE IN REGIONAL INTERNAL CONFLICT; LACK OF FUNDING; SHORTFALL IN REGIONAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE FORCES; AND LACK OF COMPREHENSIVE POLITICAL, DIPLOMATIC AND MILITARY REGIONAL COHESION. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION ABOUT THE PROGRESS OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION, NAKABIRWA NOTED THE SLOW BUT STEADY PROGRESS BUT ADMITTED THAT CONSIDERABLE DISTRUST REMAINED BETWEEN CERTAIN COUNTRIES THAT NEEDED TO BE ADDRESSED WITH CONFIDENCE BUILDING MEASURES. ASKED ABOUT EASBRIG'S OVERLAP WITH IGAD, NAKABIRWA ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THERE WAS SOME DUPLICATION BUT STRESSED THAT EASBRIG'S MEMBERSHIP IS LARGER (13 VERSUS 7) AND ITS MISSION VERY DIFFERENT.

¶ 15. (U) DURING THE SUBSEQUENT TOUR D'HORIZON OF THE FRIENDS/DONORS, SEVERAL COUNTRIES, NOTABLY THE UK, INDICATED THEY ARE ALREADY PROVIDING CONSIDERABLE ASSISTANCE. OTHERS (THE NETHERLANDS, SWEDEN ON BEHALF OF THE NORDIC BATTLE GROUP, GERMANY/GTZ, CANADA, AND NORWAY) NOTED INTENTIONS TO CONTRIBUTE IN SOME CAPACITY. (NOTE: MULONGO CLAIMED THAT JAPAN HAS INDICATED WILLINGNESS TO ASSIST WITH POLICE TRAINING.) NAIROBI DCM SLUTZ DESCRIBED U.S. BILATERAL SECURITY ASSISTANCE TO EASBRIG MEMBER STATES, INCLUDING A BATTLE SIMULATION CENTER TO THE KENYAN INTERNATIONAL PEACE SUPPORT TRAINING CENTER. CJTF-HOA COMMANDER ADMIRAL HART NOTED THE ASSIGNMENT OF A LIAISON OFFICER TO THE BRITISH PEACE SUPPORT TRAINING CENTER TO ASSIST WITH PREPARATIONS FOR THE NOVEMBER 2008 COMMAND POST EXERCISE. BOTH NOTED THAT LEGAL AUTHORITIES ARE REQUIRED -- AND UNDER CONSIDERATION IN WASHINGTON -- TO PERMIT SECURITY ASSISTANCE TO MULTI-LATERAL, REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS EASBRIG.

¶ 16. (U) THE UK CHAIR ON BEHALF OF THE FRIENDS INTRODUCED THE DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE FRIENDS FORUM. TWO ITEMS WERE FURTHER CLARIFIED: THE CHAIR WILL BE PROVIDED BY THE FRIENDS AND WILL ROTATE ON AN ANNUAL BASIS. (CANADA PROPOSED AND THE GROUP AGREED THAT THE UK SHOULD CHAIR FOR THE FIRST YEAR.) THE FRIENDS WILL MEET WITH EASBRICOM IN A FORUM AT LEAST EVERY SIX MONTHS IN NAIROBI, WITH THE OPTION OF ROTATING THE VENUE AMONG OTHER MEMBER STATES. WORKING GROUPS ON TECHNICAL ISSUES WILL BE ESTABLISHED AS DESIRED, IN NAIROBI. THE GROUP FELT THAT NAIROBI, BECAUSE IT HAS THE GREATEST NUMBER OF DIPLOMATIC AND MILITARY MISSIONS REPRESENTING THE FRIENDS IN THE REGION, SHOULD BE THE MAIN VENUE FOR THE MEETINGS.

¶ 17. (U) PARTICIPATING MISSIONS WERE ASKED TO OBTAIN APPROVAL FOR THE TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE "FRIENDS OF EASBRIG" BY EARLY 2008. A COPY OF THE CURRENT DRAFT WILL BE FAXED TO AF/RSA. EMBASSY NAIROBI REQUESTS APPROVAL OF THE TERMS OF

REFERENCE AS WELL AS GUIDANCE ON FUTURE U.S. ENGAGEMENT,
INCLUDING SECURITY ASSISTANCE, WITH EASBRICOM.

RANNEBERGER